

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8503

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2886

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON FUTURE OF LAOS

1. I CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA TODAY WITH MR. DANIEL OLIVER, AN EDITOR OF NATIONAL REVIEW. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS CONFIDENT AND GENIAL AS USUAL BUT ADMITTED BEING VERY TIRED. HE LEAVES FOR LUANG PRABANG ON APRIL 11 IN ORDER TO REST BEFORE THE NEW YEAR FESTIVITIES BEGIN.

2. IN THE COURSE OF HIS INTERVIEW WITH MR. OLIVER, THE PM EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE GOOD INTENTIONS OF THE PATHET LAO AND IN THE FUTURE COMPLIANCE OF THE OTHER SIDE WITH THE AGREEMENT AND PROTOCOL. HE SAID HE EXPECTED THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IN LAOS TO BE WITHDRAWN. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE POW/MIA PROBLEM, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE ISSUE OF THE RELEASE OF PRISONERS WOULD BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY AFTER LAO NEW YEAR WHEN THE GOVERNMENT BEGINS ITS WORK. HE SAID A CABINET MEETING WOULD BE HELD APRIL 10 BUT THAT ONLY VERY URGENT MATTERS WOULD BE DEALT WITH AND THAT OTHER QUESTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE HELD IN ABEYANCE UNTIL THE LAO NEW YEAR FESTIVAL IS OVER.

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3. IN REPLY TO SEVERAL QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SITUATION WHICH WOULD ARISE HERE IF AMERICAN AID WERE EITHER STOPPED OR GREATLY REDUCED, THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THIS WOULD BE A GRAVE ERROR ON THE PART OF THE UNITED STATES. HE SAID THAT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES LAOS WOULD BE TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON THE USSR AND CHINA. HE COMMENTED THAT HE EXPECTED INCREASED AID FROM THE SOVIET UNION NOW THAT THE COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FORMED. SUBSEQUENTLY, IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION REGARDING THE STABILITY OF THE COALITION GOVERNMENT, THE PRIME MINISTER STATED THAT IF AS A RESULT OF A COUP, OR FOR OTHER REASONS, US MILITARY ASSISTANCE WERE BROUGHT TO AN END, LAOS WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE TAKEN OVER BY THE COMMUNISTS.

4. NOTWITHSTANDING THE TONE OF THE FOREGOING, THE PRIME MINISTER EXUDED HIS TRADITIONAL OPTIMISM AND CONFIDENCE. HE REPEATEDLY AFFIRMED THAT BOTH PARTIES WERE BOUND BY A SENSE OF LAO NATIONALISM AND HE EMPHASIZED THAT IN HIS RECENT TALK WITH PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG, THE LATTER HAD MENTIONED THE PRESSURE TO WHICH HE HAD EARLIER BEEN SUBJECTED BY HIS FOLLOWERS AND BY "FRIENDLY" COUNTRIES TO FORM AN INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT. PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG HAD RESISTED THIS PRESSURE, HOWEVER, AND APPEARED SINCERELY BENT ON RESTORING NATIONAL UNITY. INDEED, ALTHOUGH TRANSLATIONS OF PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG'S SPEECH IN LUANG PRABANG HAD OMITTED THIS DECLARATION, THE PRINCE HAD AFFIRMED THERE THE UNITY OF THE KINGDOM AND THE AUTHORITY OF THE PGNU OVER THE ENTIRETY OF LAOS.

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